WAR SUFFERERS' RELIEF BULLETIN

"Not to be ministered unto, but to minister"

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The Italian Waldenses—A People in Need

By Arthur Jahnke and Howard Blosser

"As Protestant people the Waldenses have stood in adverse situations continually for nearly five hundred years. They have kept a consistent evangelical testimony with results in converts from Catholicism and in personal victorious living. Only in the past century have they been free to worship openly. In that time they have been active in increasing their usefulness and their Christian witness. We feel that these people should be supported in their work as the representatives of Evangelical Christianity. They are Italian; they know the indigenous problems as no outsider can hope to know them and to help them in the present problems will mean that their effectiveness is much greater, and at a time when Italy is probably more in need of and more willing to accept such a ministry.

"The membership in the two valleys, exclusive of the town of Pinerola, is about twenty thousand. In all of Italy the membership is over thirty-five thousand souls. The church as a whole has an active young people's group. In the valleys alone the membership of those between the ages of sixteen and twenty is about two thousand.

Hospital

"In Torino the Waldenses had a hundred-bed hospital which had a reputation of being one of the best, and which served the needs of Protestants and Catholics alike. It has been bombed and is not open now. However, the Waldenses are trying to put it back into operation as limited means will permit. Funds are scarce and everything, if at all available, is high priced. The next problem will be to staff it. During the last twenty years the Waldenses have had few nurses trained because a Government order made it compulsory to train in state hospitals and therefore closed their own training school in the Torino hospital. This training in state schools was prohibitive because it was expensive. In the second place the atmosphere of those institutions did not foster the spirit of sacrificial service that the church operated institutions cherish. Consequently, the number of nurses in the Order of Deaconesses is quite small and they are mostly elderly. In this connection the chairman of the board of directors of the hospitals voiced his personal opinion that new personnel with up-to-date training in modern practice was needed in their hospitals. Here appears to be a ready-made opening. It could also, later, be the lead to a project of visiting outlying villages to give health education, clerical aid and medical service. It appears that the services of a doctor are hard to get in the higher villages.

Reconstruction

"An area of great need is the repairing of the burned homes, especially in view of the long hard winter in that area. (Still snow in many villages visited, and several villages thoroughly snowbound on 19th of April.) This, together with the clothing need, is no doubt the most urgent.

"There is stone and also a little timber available. However, getting these two essentials to the people that need them is one **big** problem. Money or other wherewithal, and transportation are the

chief necessities. Probably in the former case the interest and activity of an outsider in organizing and integrating community effort can be very worth while. The latter problem is an unfamiliar one to us because of the terrain. Motor transport seems impractical.

Schools

"A need not so critical but none the less vital is that of school supplies. The reopening of schools and the facilitating of their function is a very necessary step in rehabilitating a people, reviving their initiative, and fitting them to handle their own problems. The schools we visited are very much hampered by lack of supplies. It would be a great boon to the orphanages, the Latin school and the collegiate to even get only such essentials as note books, pencils, paper, art material and maps. And we feel it would be a fairly simple matter for our organization to alleviate that need. Another matter, not so simple, which is giving the Waldensian leaders much concern is hope to open the boarding school in Torre Pellice this fall. They feel it is definitely needed for the students from the outlying districts whose education has been interrupted or delayed. But this school, during several years of use as a barracks by German troops, has been stripped of beds, bedding, furniture, and kitchen equipment, plus many windows broken, besides the loss of many of such essentials as chemistry and physics equipment, the library, and maps and all recreational equipment. The boarding school normally accommodated sixty students.

Improving Economic Status

"There are several possible areas in which the community's general income and living standards could be raised. Several ministers feel that if during the long winter months the rural folks could find something profitable to do it could be a great help. Home crafts or industries might be an answer. Someone experienced in co-operative endeavor and acquainted with some of the home industries as fostered by the Swiss or in our own mountain districts could possibly begin such a work here. Some wool is grown (very likely it could be increased) but little of it is processed in the valleys. We were told that a hardy type of cotton was once grown here and woven into cloth which had a ready market as table cloths, napkins, etc. Local granite and marble quarries are closed because of insufficient capital to operate them and competition that used unfair means to close them.

"Concerning the people and their ways much of interest may be said. Due to their proximity to the French and Swiss borders and due to the course of their church history, they have mixed with these nationalities to some extent. They are very hospitable, opening their homes to us freely, and using their scanty resources to provide us refreshment. They do not complain for they have had difficult times before. One is impressed time and again by the sturdy character which is reflected in the speech and behavior of these people. Clean, simple, godly living has left them a heritage of real worth.

"In the church service we found a tie that needed no words. The Spirit was present among these people who sang, prayed and worshipped as we do. We felt at home among them though we could not understand many of the actual words of the sermons. In three churches we were asked to speak and, the ministers interpreting for us, we gave short messages of greeting.

"The young people of the church are active in Christian Endeavor and summer camps, though they have worked under handicaps for the past number of years. They plan a large camp conference high in the mountains this summer, when delegates from all Waldensian Churches of Italy and Sicily will meet to discuss problems and plan the work for the future of their group. Youth fellowship meetings are held in all the churches several times a month. We attended one of them.

"Time and again we felt the warmth of the Christian hand of fellowship from these people. It was often repeated to us that it was such a joy to see new faces of friends who believed as they did and had come to see them at this time of distress. The group desires to know more about the Mennonites and the work they are doing. We feel that a closer connection between the groups should be worked out for the interchange of ideas and information and for the strengthening of Christian faith and bonds of brotherhood."

"When we might be inclined to discouragement before the great need, we look to the Master who fed the five thousand with the lad's lunch and pray His blessing upon our little to the blessing of many."—Lydia Lehman.

Thinking about Relief

The Waldenses

Dotting the valleys leading up to the Alpine Mountains in northern Italy are a number of little communities and towns populated by a people known as Waldenses. The Waldenses are an evangelical sect founded around the year 1170 by a man named Peter Waldo who was rather strangely and miraculously brought to a realization of his lost condition and resolved to "repent, amend his life, and be more diligent in the fear of God than he had hitherto been." Like the Anabaptists (they were actually called Anabaptists in some places) they opposed the Roman church in such things as infant baptism, worship of images, invocation of saints, etc.; they were opposed to taking up arms, swearing of oaths and participation in government, and practiced modesty of attire and simple living. Although there does not appear to be a direct descent from the Waldenses to the Anabaptists and Mennonites through a line of ordained officials, there can be no doubt as to the continuity in principles of the Waldenses in the evangelical Anabaptists and Mennonites. It is quite certain that their traditions and influences contributed to the rise of the Swiss Brethren Church. Though they have lost several of the tenets which characterized the earlier church, they are still one of the outstanding evangelical groups in northern Italy.

The Director of the MCC Unit in Italy heard of the need of these folks and of the damage they suffered during the war, and accordingly arranged with UNRRA to send two MCC workers, Arthur Jahnke and Howard Blosser, to their communities to investigate their circumstances. The preceding article in this issue of the **War Sufferers' Relief Bulletin** is made up of excerpts from their report to UNRRA and the MCC.

Change of Editors

With this issue of the **War Sufferers' Relief Bulletin** comes a change in editorship. The former editor, Daniel B. Suter, has been released from Civilian Public Service and is leaving the Publicity Office. John A. Hostetler of Kalona, Iowa, has been appointed Publicity Editor and is accordingly responsible for the direction of this publication. For the past five months Brother Hostetler has been doing research work on China and with his interest in the relief program of the Church will be well fitted to make this publication a valuable channel for keeping the constituency informed on the activities of their representatives on the field.—D.B.S.

"Thanks Be to God"

I do not thank Thee, Lord, that I have bread to eat while others starve;
Nor yet for work to do while empty hands solicit heaven;
Nor for a body strong while other bodies flatten beds of pain.
No, not for these do I give thanks!

But I am grateful, Lord, because my meager loaf I may divide;
And that my busy hands may move to meet another's need;
Because my doubled strength I may expend to steady one who faints.
Yea, for all these do I give thanks!

—Janie Alford

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Material Aid Notes

C.P.S. Contributions for Relief

Mennonite people during the course of the past year have given liberal support to the relief program. Material goods having an evaluation of approximately a million and a half dollars have actually been shipped by the Mennonite Central Committee to foreign countries during the past 16 months.

The support and interest which CPS men have given to the relief program has been very outstanding. This support has found expression in individual and unit or camp relief projects.

A great many discharged CPS men have become staunch supporters of the relief program upon their return to civilian life. Contributions of $100 and $180 were received recently from two discharged CPS men. Of the 120 relief workers en route to or on the field outside of Puerto Rico 35 are former CPS men. Twenty-two of the forty workers in Puerto Rico are CPS men. An additional number are under appointment for foreign service.

These practical expressions of concern and interest are commendable and they pointedly demonstrate that men in CPS are quite willing to share liberally of themselves and of their own limited means with the suffering peoples of this day.

May God bless you for this positive expression of your peace witness and will you continue to support this effort with your prayers and your gifts.

Gift Parcels to Germany

Washington—The Post Office Department announced that gift parcels will be accepted for delivery to the United States zone of Germany, except the sector of Berlin, effective June 1.

Postal restrictions, of course, must be met in the packaging of these shipments for mailing. Postal regulations restrict the weight of an individual parcel to a maximum of eleven (11) pounds, the value of an individual parcel to $25.00 or less, and the measurements of the parcel to a maximum of three and one-half (3½) feet in length or six (6) feet in length and girth combined. The content of a package is limited to items of a personal nature, such as: clothing, piece goods, toilet preparations including soaps and shaving creams, writing materials, medicinals including vitamins, and nonperishable foodstuffs. No writing or printed matter may be included. The rate is fourteen cents a pound. Parcels and customs declarations must be marked "gift parcel" and the value and contents stated on the customs declarations. Only one each week may be sent by one person to the same addressee.

West Coast Clothing Center

The clothing collection phase of the relief program has had a steady increase from the beginning. As the needs increased the interest and response of Christians also increased and it became necessary to open more clothing centers. During the past winter the increase seems to have been by leaps and bounds, which crowded all the centers beyond capacity. This, together with the Food for Relief program seemed to make it advisable to have a relief center on the west coast. After comparing the Mennonite populations of Oregon and California and considering the location from the shipping angle it was decided to open the relief center at Reedley, California. Reedley has a population of about 5,000 and is the center of a large Mennonite Community.

Anna Snyder, Director of the Reedley clothing center, writes: "The building available to us and adequate for our present needs is on property owned by the Mennonite Brethren churches on which they are building their new Bible School. We will be allowed the use of this building free of rent. Some repair and other work was necessary to get it ready for use. We appreciate also the interest and cooperation of the local people in helping to get the Center into operation. We hope the churches in the western coast area will take advantage of the opportunity to save on the cost of transportation by shipping or bringing their clothing to the Mennonite Central Committee Clothing Center, Reedley, California."

"We also urge all contributors to help hasten the shipping of this clothing by carefully examining and repairing, when necessary, all clothing before sending. Let us labor together in the Name of Christ, and in His name send our message of His love through our gifts."

Charity gives itself rich; covetousness hoards itself poor. —German Proverb

Displaced Mennonites in Denmark

By Walter Gering

We have just returned from a three weeks' survey of the various camps in Denmark where Mennonites are represented. During the course of this trip we had the opportunity of visiting and contacting over 1,500 Mennonites in forty different camps. These represent the largest part of our Mennonite people in Denmark at the present time. There may be a few scattered about in other camps but according to all indications the sum total will not be much over 1,500. The classification of these might be of interest to you as it indicates partially the problem . . . There are 300 men and 750 women sixteen years of age and over; 175 boys and 175 girls six to sixteen years of age; 100 children between two and six and 20 babies under two years of age.

The purpose of the survey made was twofold: First of all we wished to make a personal contact with our people wherever possible to assure them of the interest and concern of our Mennonite people in North America; then also we desired to become acquainted with their physical needs. Both of these aims have been at least partially accomplished. In each of the camps visited we had the Mennonite group assembled in such a manner that we could either speak to them as a group or as individual families in their barracks, depending on the camp conditions. Several services were held where all were present and in other cases prayers were offered up to the Throne of Grace. Then also each family was given a personal interview in which they could state their individual needs. In this way we feel that we have contacted personally most of the Mennonite families in these camps. We have counted it a privilege indeed to have had this opportunity of entering into a sharing of their experiences and believe that it has been of mutual blessing.

General Conditions

Since Brother Klassen visited the group last year conditions have changed considerably for the better in many respects. At that time the whole refugee program was in the making and one can well realize that the responsibility of providing for the welfare of 200,000 refugees suddenly thrust upon a small country like Denmark was and is no small matter. Housing, food supplies and general management required a great deal of wisdom and consideration. At the time when Brother Klassen was here hundreds of people were jammed into single halls with no beds, tables or chairs. Food and sanitary conditions were bad, much sickness, and many died during the early stages of internment. Today, thank God, many of these conditions have been changed: that does not mean that conditions are ideal but at least much improved over last fall. Conditions vary in the different camps. In some, living quarters are still crowded, but at least each family has the necessary beds, chairs and table. Health conditions are improving and the Danish authorities tell us that the death rate is as low if not lower within the camps than in Denmark proper. Food supplies are quite adequate according to the replies our people gave when I questioned them along these lines. They say they get sufficient so they need not hunger. However, as one might well expect, the menu has not too much variety. Most of the food is prepared in the main kitchen of the camp and then each family takes their portion to their own barrack where they can eat as individual families. That is good as it helps to maintain a resemblance of family life. In many of the camps we have found that Mennonites have been fortunate in getting housed in the same room, barrack or nearby barrack. That has helped to bind the group together. I must say that in almost all the camps we visited we discovered that our Mennonite people were knit together in fellowship with each other. Once having found one of them we had no trouble finding the rest in the camp as they not only know each other but frequently, and in some places regularly, meet to discuss their common problems and exchange news items which may have come through letters. General conditions are improving gradually as the program goes on; schools are being set into action for the children, religious services are being organized by the Danish Church Council and work of some kind is being provided for those able to work.

Morale

One can hardly imagine the feeling and heartaches which are represented by these refugees. As we passed from one camp to another we discovered that while condi-

tions varied in the main the problem is the same everywhere. There are any number of young mothers with 4-5 small children looking out into the future with apprehension. They have no money, no home and no able-bodied husband and father to provide a living. There are many aged mothers and fathers whose life span has about drawn to a close. Now when they should be enjoying the sunset of eventide they are faced with a stormy close. Others are sickly, maimed and crippled; still others orphans. This is the group to which we have undertaken to extend our hand of fellowship. It makes one catch his breath to hear, as I heard it from the lips of one of our brethren, the hopeless despairing words: "Wir sind hier und kein mensch kuemmert sich ueber uns." Then again there are the words of another who with tear-filled eyes clasped my hand and said: "You do not know what it means to us to have someone come to us personally with a kind word and concern." These people have undergone severe trials and testings and still are under emotional strain. Two questions constantly rise before them and cannot be answered: where are the rest of our family members and what about the future? There are few families where some members are not missing and while recent weeks have brought word from some, still large numbers of husbands, wives or children are unaccounted for. This is one of the great concerns of these people. The future for many of them seems very dark since many of them are hardly capable of starting all over again in the establishment of their own homes. Yet in spite of all this we have discovered a general spirit of hope and courage. There prevails a faith that the Lord in His own time shall show the way. We have discovered Mennonites in responsible places of leadership in camp life and camp authorities have told us that they represent some of the finer element in the camp body. They have commanded the respect of those who work with them.

Transportation

The camps in which our Mennonite people are located are scattered all over Denmark. They are located from the extreme east to the west, from the north to the south borders. In the course of our survey we travelled approximately 2,300 kilometers. These 40 camps are either at the extreme edge of some city or else several miles out in the country. Train travel will not meet the need and unless we have other means of getting to these camps our program here will be practically at a standstill. Not only is the problem arising in connection with camp visitation but already the thought of transportation of internees to the border on their way back home is arising. There are those who are hopeful of getting official permission to return to their close relatives still in Germany. The question of transportation to the border is one which the Danish government is not yet fully ready to assume. The next two weeks or so we shall be getting the clothing ready for distribution. Then we must find some means of getting to the camps again to distribute them to our people.

Clothing

The 15 ton shipment of clothing is a beginning in the direction of supplying the needs. Many of these people came to Denmark with only the clothes they were wearing and a small hand bag. They have been here for a year now and their clothes are badly worn. That is true of all internees—not only Mennonites. Approximately one-half the shipment is to be given to Mennonites under our personal supervision. The other half goes to non-Mennonites administered through the regular camp avenues of distribution. The need for clothing is increasing rapidly and by winter all will need them. We wish to suggest now that another shipment be sent which is to be distributed generally among all internees as an expression of our good will and concern for all the needy. I am approaching the Administration with the question as to whether they will accept a shipment for such general distribution. This shipment for general distribution should be sent soon, as the need is here now. Then a bit later some things especially designated for our Mennonite people will again be in order. Opinion among the authorities here seems to be that these people will definitely be in great need.

Loyalty to our Lord who was filled with compassion to feed the hungry, heal the sick, and comfort those afflicted and lonely, demands that we minister in the spirit of the Samaritan to suffering humanity as it lies today broken and bleeding on the Jericho Road.—Elsie Thomas Culver.

Notes from the Field

MCC In Germany

A word about our school feeding program in Greater Hesse. Children in the cities of Darmstadt, Kassel, Frankfurt, Giessen, Hanau, Offenback—all devastated cities—will be receiving warm school lunches each day, the lunch being approximately of 400 calories. Yesterday in a Frankfurt warehouse I had the heart-warming experience of seeing MCC-contributed supplies—45 tons of flour from the Buhler and McPherson areas, about 15 tons of powdered milk. The losses en route were less than one per cent. Some of these supplies go to cooperative child feeding, some to expellees via Evangelisches Hilfswerk channels.

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity of representing our Mennonite people in this CRALOG undertaking. I do believe that no group has mobilized so completely their resources and given so freely of their possessions for war sufferers as our own people. It is a joy to be the representative of ones so sensitive to human need. My regret is that the door has not yet been opened for additional MCC workers to enter this zone to distribute this relief. Our traditional MCC formula of relief operations has been a threefold one: supplies, money, personnel. Supplies are virtually the only thing we are now permitted to import. I guess we must remember that we are operating in a zone of military occupation in a defeated country—perhaps a unique setting in the history of MCC operations.—Robert Kreider

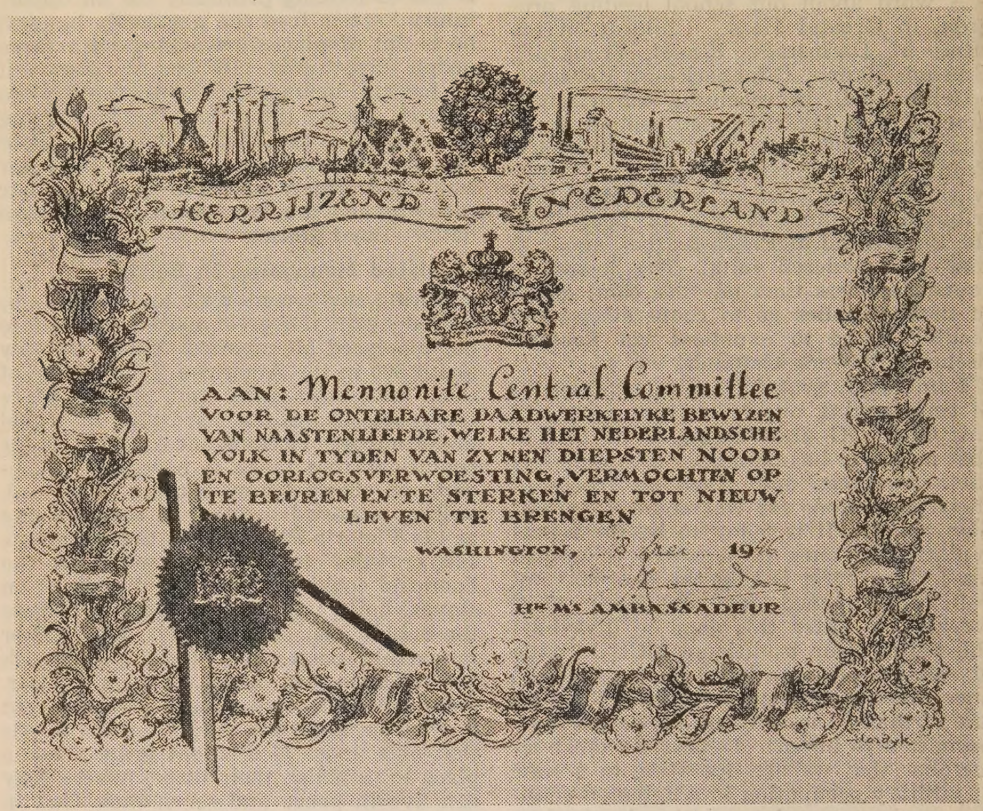
With UNRRA in Italy

In spite of many difficulties our workers are exhibiting that very personal relationship with these unfortunates which Christ exhibited when He said that the people were not His servants, "ye are my friends." He had taken them into His heart. So our people exhibit by His grace that love which redeems mankind and shows them concretely that someone may yet care for them. That is the first step in working with these unhappy people. That is very inspiring.

Earlier one felt much concern about the work in the camps, others were saying that the Italian population needed help much more badly than do the foreign D.P.'s. But after a personal visit one finds much that is to be done on a non-material basis and much of a worth-while nature. If one is looking primarily for an opportunity here to feed the physically hungry, he is out of place in working with these people right now. He can, however, if he has the inclination and the ability, do a much greater thing than that in helping these people establish themselves emotionally. We hope that you will keep our small and widely scattered group in your thoughts and prayers. We shall need them daily.—Boyd Nelson

Displaced Mennonites in Berlin

During my recent visit to Berlin I observed again the great need for relief to our displaced Mennonites. There are now about 500 in the American Zone. Some of them have been going from place to place for years, facing the hardships of travel under adverse circumstances, living under conditions that make it necessary to depend on others for everything they need, willing to crowd together in quarters like at 12a Victoria Place where there are now 146 crowded together (sleeping on the floor and cooking what food they have on stoves built with bricks gathered from the rubble just outside their door). Poor in earthly possessions, these people ask for but little food to eat, clothing to wear, and a place to live. There is a constant prayer on their lips and in their hearts that once more God might grant them a place to establish their homes where they can live in peace and serve their God in accordance with the dictates of their conscience. Often they cry in their prayers, "Oh God! How long?" They have need of many things; they miss their former homes and missing loved ones, but as I have worshipped together with them, I sensed above all, their deep longing for spiritual relief—for the family altar where unhindered they can unite in prayer and teach their children the Word of God—for church life as they used to know it, where as a community they can gather for worship and strengthen each other in their spiritual life. They want peace—a quiet place to live and work; and finally, they want a heavenly home. One feels as one mingles with these simple folks that though they have grown poor in earthly possessions, they have grown rich in spirit. Their material needs are God's call to us to help them. God grant that we may not fail them.—Sam J. Goering.



Facsimile of official certificate handed to MCC representatives by His Excellency, The Ambassador of The Netherlands, at an official reception on May 8 for the various relief organizations who assisted Holland during the recent emergency. (Translation appears below.)

Presented to
MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE
For the innumerable tangible evidences of brotherly love, by which the people of the Netherlands, encouraged and strengthened during the time of their greatest need, arising from the devastation of war, were enabled to begin life anew.

(signed) ALAXANDER LOUDON
8 May 1946 Her Majesty's Ambassador